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RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 4082
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7973
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5219
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2448
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2578
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RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5088
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 001235

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: EDUCATION PROPOSAL PASSES COMMITTEE

REF: LA PAZ 1711

Classified By: Ecopol Counselor Andrew Erickson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The GOB's education proposal was approved by committee on April 10, but has yet to appear before the full congress (reftel). The Catholic Church fears the proposal is an effort to stifle religious education, and private schools believe the GOB is exerting unprecedented control over the sector. Armando Gutierrez (strictly protect), the Vice Ministry of CultureFxjJV:nge, and the new curriculum of the Bolivian educational system is being developed in this framework by intellectuals, teachers, and indigenous wise men."

Heated Opposition

¶3. (U) The Catholic Church fears the GOB proposal is an effort to stifle religious education, and private schools believe the GOB is exerting unprecedented control over the sector. The University of San Andres (UMSA) is especially vocal in its opposition to the education law. UMSA argues that the law threatens the school's autonomy over its curriculum and has racist undertones. Cinthia Valero, a member of UMSA's Linguistic Education Committee stated, "Since the law was first proposed it has only mentioned native cultures and Afro-Bolivians while discriminating against those of European descent." Another contentious point is the GOB's assertion of its prerogative in choosing "indigenous wise men"-- it appears that formal "book learning" will have no place in the selection criteria.

Bilingualism- A Good Idea in Theory?

¶5. (C) Armando Gutierrez (strictly protect), the Vice Ministry of Culture's National Director of Libraries, told Poloff on April 27 that the population is divided over the new education law, although he would not speculate on whether it would pass Congress. The education law presumably would benefit the indigenous and rural populations, but many argue

that its application is impractical. Part of this negative reaction is Eurocentric racism. Gutierrez exclaimed to Poloff, "What are students going to read if there are no books in Quechua or Aymara?" More pragmatically, Gutierrez argued that most Bolivians want to adapt and integrate into the globalized world, and focusing on Spanish, and not indigenous languages, is the means to accomplishing this goal.

16. (U) Comment: Education reform in Bolivia continues to be a controversial subject, with even some GOB officials doubting the proposal will benefit the indigenous population. End comment.

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